

Learn to Read Koine Greek

‘αλφαβητα’ Cheat Sheet

Alphabet: (vowels shaded, easily confused letters bolded)

Greek	α	β	γ	δ	ε	ζ	η	θ	ι	κ	λ	μ	ν	ξ	ο	π	ρ	σ/ς	τ	υ	φ	χ	ψ	ω
Caps	Α	Β	Γ	Δ	Ε	Ζ	Η	Θ	Ι	Κ	Λ	Μ	Ν	Ξ	Ο	Π	Ρ	Σ	Τ	Υ	Φ	Χ	Ψ	Ω
Transliteration	a	b	g	d	e	z	eh	th	i	k	l	m	n	x	o	p	r	s	t	u	f	ch	ps	oh

Diphthongs:

Diphthongs are double-vowels in appearance only. They sound (in mathematical pronunciation) and act like one vowel.

Combination	Pronunciation
αι	‘ <u>ai</u> se’
αυ	‘ <u>scou</u> t’
ει	‘ <u>hey</u> ’
ευ/ηυ	‘ <u>you</u> ’ / <u>eulogy</u> ’
οι	‘ <u>oi</u> l’
ου	‘ <u>food</u> ’
υι	‘ <u>sui</u> te’

Vowel Combinations:

First Vowel	Second Vowel							
	ε	ει	η	η	ο	ου	οι	ω
α	α	α	α	α	ω	ω	ω	ω
ε	ει	ει	η	η	ου	ου	οι	ω
ο	ου	οι	ω	οι	ου	ου	οι	ω

Double Consonants:

Type	Unvoiced	Voiced	Fricative	Before σ	Before μ
Labial	π	β	φ	ψ	μ
Dental	τ	δ	θ	ζ or σ	σ
Velar	κ	γ	χ	ξ	γ

Typical Changes:

Compensatory lengthening: if one sound drops out, a preceding vowel sound will often be lengthened. Words end in a vowels, ν, ρ, or ς (ξ, ψ) (with the exception of a few particles like (έκ, ούκ). Where you would expect a ντσ combination, as the τσ

will drop out, while the preceding vowel is lengthened.

Crasis: rather than sounding two vowels in a row, sometimes (somewhat rare) words are contracted something like English’s *don’t* or *can’t*. The indicator is a breathing mark (‘ or ’) that is not on the first letter (which will be a consonant), but rather on the first vowel sound: καί + έγώ → κάγώ

Elision: far more frequently, the final vowel sound of a word is omitted, marked with an apostrophe: ἐπι ἦν → ἐφ’ ἦν (note the elision and π → φ before a rough breathing mark).

Iota subscript: when iota is at the end of a word, before an α, η, or ω, it will drop underneath to form *iota subscript*: φ η α

Syllables and Accents:

Syllables: break on double vowel-sounds (vowel or diphthong) or double consonants (but ψ, ξ, etc. count as one consonant). υιός → υι/ός αντί → αν/τί

Accents: acute (έ) grave (ι) and circumflex, which is a combination of acute–grave (Ͽ); Pronounce the stress on the accented syllable.

There are two breathing marks (‘ or ’), pronounced like an ‘h’ before the vowel. Diaeresis (the two dots in ΜωϿσής) signal the vowels should be pronounced as separate syllables.